

Disclaimers

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SAMPLE Child Protection Policy

(This policy was adopted by the Session on [enter date here](#) and replaces all other existing child protection policies before this date.)

"Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them." Mark 10:14, 16

"Now it is required that those who have been given trust must prove faithful." 1 Corinthians 4:2

1. PURPOSE OF POLICY

This policy is intended to protect children participating in events sponsored by [enter your church name here](#). This policy applies to compensated **church** staff or **church** volunteers who have the responsibility of supervising the activities of minors ages 18 and below. This policy does not constitute a contract between **the church** and its employees/volunteers or any other party. It is merely a statement of policy and general guideline which **the church** will seek to follow. **The church** makes no guarantee to any party that all aspects of this policy will be followed in any given situation. **The church** is not responsible for the individual acts of any employee/volunteer.

2. DEFINITION OF TERMS

Child abuse shall be defined as any action (or lack of action) which endangers or harms a child's physical, psychological or emotional health and development. Child abuse occurs in different ways and includes the following:

- a) **Physical abuse:** any physical injury to a minor which is not accidental, such as beating, shaking, burns, biting.
- b) **Emotional abuse:** emotional injury occurs when the minor is not nurtured or provided with love and security, such as an environment of constant criticism, belittling, persistent teasing.
- c) **Sexual abuse:** any sexual activity between a minor and an adult or between minors, including activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest, pornography. Other forms of sexual abuse can include verbal comments, exposure to pornographic materials, obscene phone calls, allowing minors to witness sexual activity.

Employee shall be defined as any individual who is paid by **the church** on a full or part-time basis and is serving in any position involving the supervision or custody of minors.

Church shall be defined as [enter your church name here](#).

Child, children, youth and minor shall be defined as any individual age 18 and under.

Screening Committee shall be defined as those individuals appointed by the executive committee of the Session who will be responsible for approving all employees and volunteers who serve in a **church** ministry to minors.

Volunteer shall be defined as any individual who is not paid by the church and is serving in any position involving the supervision or custody of minors.

3. SELECTION AND SCREENING PROCESS

The church believes that appropriate personal relationships between adult employees/volunteers and minors of **the church** foster the community of Christ. **The church** will seek to prevent the abuse of minors when they are participating in church programs. Preventive measures include screening, training and supervision of all employees/volunteers and a commitment to eliminating opportunities for abuse within church programs and church sponsored events. This screening includes the following:

a) *Six month rule*

No applicants will be considered for any position involving contact with minors until they have been involved with **the church** for a minimum of six months. This time of interaction between **the church** and the applicant allows for better evaluation of the suitability of the applicant for working with minors. Exceptions to this policy must be approved by the screening committee. [Due to the nature of the school year cycle, the MDO staff is exempt from this provision.](#)

b) *Written application*

All individuals seeking to work with minors must complete a confidential application form; read, be in agreement with, and sign [the church enter the name of the document which describes the employee/volunteer's commitment to the church and its teachings here¹](#); and give written permission for a criminal records check and have references reviewed. In addition, the individual may be interviewed by a member of the screening committee. Approval to work with minors must be granted by **the church** Screening Committee and the Session. The application will be maintained in confidence on file at **the church**.

c) *Training*

¹ For example, one church uses a "Covenant to Teach and Nurture"

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Instruction and review of **the church** child protection policy will be offered annually during scheduled training sessions.

4. EMPLOYEES/VOLUNTEERS WHO ARE MINORS

Employees/volunteers, who are themselves under age 18, are a valuable resource in the care and nurture of our covenant children. The following guidelines apply to this employee/volunteer.

- a) Volunteers must be at least [enter your preferred age here](#)² years old; employees must be at least 14³ years old.
- b) Minor employees/volunteers shall be screened and trained as specified above with the exception of a required criminal records check.
- c) Applications submitted by a minor employee/volunteer must be signed by their parent/legal guardian where indicated.

5. SUPERVISORY REQUIREMENTS

The church has zero tolerance for abuse in its programs and ministry activities. It is the responsibility of every employee/volunteer in children and youth ministries to act in the best interest of all minors in every program. The following requirements shall be applicable to all employees/volunteers who have contact with minors participating in any program at **the church** or a church sponsored event.

a) *Safety of children*

It is the responsibility of employees/volunteers to promote the emotional and physical safety of minors giving regard to all factors and circumstances known to them. If, in their opinion, an unsafe condition exists, they shall immediately take appropriate precautions to protect all minors.

b) *Two-deep leadership*

A reasonable effort shall be made to have two non-related employees/volunteers present in the room (or nearby) with minors during **church** activities.

One-on-one contact between minors and employees/volunteers should be avoided. **The church** recognizes that there will be times when an unaccompanied employee/volunteer may be present with a group of minors or with a single minor. In those circumstances (such as Sunday school or counseling), doors to the room shall remain open and windows shall remain uncovered or the activity shall be conducted in a public space, in view of other adults or minors. Written parental consent should be obtained and on file in the program director's office before the contact if possible; if not, a report of the meeting should be conveyed to the employee's supervisor following the meeting.

Meetings that regularly occur between one employee/volunteer and a group of minors or with a single minor (junior or senior high small groups, private music lessons, counseling, etc) shall have written parental consent from each participant on file in the program director's office before the meetings occur.

The church recognizes that a fundamental goal of the junior and senior high philosophy of ministry is to build relationships with students and families and to have regular, intentional contact with students. Meetings that spontaneously occur between one employee/volunteer and a group of minors or with a single minor are to be encouraged rather than thwarted by the scope of this policy. Therefore, employees/volunteers will be responsible to conduct these meetings in view of other adults and/or minors, to phone parents to receive verbal permission before the meeting occurs and to file a report of the meeting with their supervisor following the meeting.

c) *Ratio of employee/volunteers to minors*

When supervising minors, it is required that a reasonable ratio of employees/volunteers to minors be maintained at all times. The supervisor overseeing the age group shall be primarily responsible for setting and maintaining a reasonable ratio of employees/volunteers to minors giving due regard to all factors present, including the number and age of the participants, the nature of the activities and the location where the activities are taking place.

d) *Overnight procedures*

Overnight activities will require a signed permission statement from the parent/legal guardian of the minor(s) participating, must have a minimum of two employees/volunteers participating and must maintain a ratio of one employee/volunteer per nine minors. An employee/volunteer may never sleep in the same bed as a minor. There must be both male and female employees/volunteers present at all co-ed overnights and at least two same-gender employees/volunteers on same-gender overnights. On campouts, no employee/volunteer may ever be in or sleep in a tent with minors.

e) *No confidentiality*

² For instance, one church requires volunteers to be at least 12 years of age.

³ Please ensure that the age listed complies with all local/federal laws which are applicable to your church.

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Employees/volunteers can never promise confidentiality to a minor. Employees/volunteers must report to the [\(assigned staff person\)](#) if a minor discusses harming himself or others, committing a crime or being abused.⁴

f) *Digital privacy*

Inappropriate use of cameras, imaging, or digital devices is prohibited. It is inappropriate to use any device capable of recording or transmitting visual images in areas where privacy is expected by participants, especially minors. Posting ANY images on the internet is not allowed unless permission has been granted by the parents/legal guardians and approved by your supervisor.

g) *Hazing and bullying*

Physical hazing and initiations are prohibited. Verbal, physical and cyber bullying are prohibited.

h) *Controlled substances*

The use of tobacco, alcohol, drugs and/or mind altering substances with minors is prohibited.

6. PHYSICAL/NON-PHYSICAL CONTACT

I. *Permissible Contact*

a) Limited physical contact with minors, such as a pat on the back or on the head, or a handshake, is permissible. Brief hugs are permissible within sight of others. Employees/volunteers must avoid any prolonged hugs and must stop a hug immediately upon request of the minor. Touching hands, faces, shoulders and arms, placing an arm around the shoulders, sitting beside minors, holding hands during prayer, high fives and hand slapping are all appropriate.

b) *Gift giving*

Accepting and giving gifts from/to minors is permissible when appropriate (Christmas, birthday) but is discouraged as a frequent practice. Report to your supervisor any gifts you receive that seem inappropriately given.

c) *Close emotional relationships*

Employees/volunteers need to avoid developing close emotional relationships with minors of the opposite sex and exercise extreme caution in dealing with minors of the same sex.

II. *Prohibited Contact*

a) *Sexual abuse*

Any physical contact between an employee/volunteer and a minor that would provide, or is intended to provide, any form of sexual gratification.

b) *Physical contact*

Physical contact between an employee/volunteer and a minor such as giving massages, kissing, prolonged embracing and the like.

c) *Physical abuse*

Striking, spanking, shaking, slapping or other violent behaviors towards a minor.

d) *Pornography*

Showing minors images that are pornographic is prohibited. Accidental viewing of pornography when in the presence of minors should be reported to your supervisor immediately. If employees/volunteers become aware of the existence of child pornography in the hands of a minor, they should immediately report this to their supervisor.

e) *Verbal/mental abuse*

Language that is humiliating, degrading, threatening, sexual, personally intimate, related to body development or physique or crude-regardless of how the communication was conveyed (e.g. text messages, email, phone calls, social networking sites, etc).

f) *Dating*

At no time shall any employee/volunteer pursue a dating relationship with a minor and should be sensitive to minors with "crushes."

III. *Reporting*

All employee/volunteers are responsible for immediately discussing with their supervisor any signs of possible violations of the above and/or concerns they may have about possible victimization.

7. DISCIPLINE PROCEDURES

⁴ Please note that other obligations may apply depending on local/federal laws applicable to your church. Please consult an attorney prior to specifying when your church's employees/volunteers MUST make a report.

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- a) No form of punishment that involves pain or physical discomfort may be used. Minors may be restrained if they are in danger of hurting themselves or others. Disruptive minors may be removed from the group when necessary.
- b) Complete discipline procedures are available [insert the location of your church's policy regarding working with minors here](#).⁵

8. TRANSPORTATION PROCEDURES

- a) All drivers should be licensed and have proof of insurance with limits that meet or exceed requirements of the state in which the vehicle is registered and primarily used.
- c) Complete transportation procedures are available [insert the location of your church's policy regarding transportation of minors here](#).⁶

9. CONSEQUENCES OF VIOLATION OF CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Any employee/volunteer accused of committing a prohibited act or any act considered by **the church** to be harmful to a minor, may be immediately suspended from participation in any **church** ministry for minors. Any employee/volunteer found in violation of **the church** Child Protection Policy may be prohibited from future participation as an employee/volunteer in all **church** ministries for minors. If the person is an employee, such conduct may also result in termination of employment from **the church**.

10. REPORTING ALLEGED CHILD ABUSE

- a. *Reporting obligation*
[Please consult the laws of your state to determine what is REQUIRED, and insert the information here.](#)ⁱ
- b. *To whom to report*
Nothing in this policy shall negate the right or responsibility of **church** employees/volunteers to report suspicions of abuse to the appropriate law enforcement agency/department.
- c. *How to report*
An employee/volunteer is required to report an incident to supervisory staff as soon as possible after the incident. The reporter will be asked to fill out a **church Report of Child Abuse** form which is available from your supervisor and attached to this policy. The reporter may, and-when legally required to do so-should, also directly contact the appropriate state/local agency which deals with the investigation of incidents of alleged child abuse.

11. RESPONSE PLAN

In the event that an incident of child abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred on the premises of **the church** or during a **church** sponsored program or activity, the following procedure shall be implemented by the [\(assigned staff person\)](#) unless he/she is alleged to be involved.

1. The parent(s) or legal guardian(s) of the minor shall be notified.

⁵ for example, one church has an "employee/volunteer training guide for working with minors".

⁶ for example, one church has an "employee/volunteer training guide for working with minors".

ⁱ For example, some of the reporting obligations in Tennessee are summarized below.

- a. Reporting obligation
Tennessee state law mandates that anyone who has knowledge of or suspects abuse or neglect of a child must report it. The law makes no distinction between professional and non-professionals on the issue of reporting. Employees/volunteers involved in church ministries to minors must be aware of their individual responsibility to report any good faith suspicion or belief that a minor is or has been physically or sexually abused, physically or emotionally neglected, exposed to any form of violence or threat, exposed to any form of sexual exploitation including the possession, manufacture, or distribution of child pornography, online solicitation, enticement or showing of obscene material. Failure to report a prohibited act to the designated person is a violation of this policy and grounds for an employee's termination of employment. Volunteers who fail to report a prohibited act witnessed or suspected by them may be restricted from participation in any activity involving minors. Minors, whether employees or volunteers, are exempt from this reporting requirement.
- b. To whom to report
Nothing in this policy negates the right or responsibility of church employees/volunteers to report suspicions of abuse to the appropriate law enforcement agency, the Department of Family and Protective Services or Child Protective Services.
An employee/volunteer may report to an immediate supervisor, the Associate Pastor of Children and Youth or the Senior Associate Pastor and allow supervisory personnel to make the appropriate report to law enforcement agencies. The employee/volunteer should confirm that supervisory personnel have reported the matter to law enforcement agencies and do so him- or herself should he or she have any doubt as to whether the matter has been so reported.
- c. How to report
An employee/volunteer is required to report an incident to supervisory staff as soon as possible after the incident. The reporter will be asked to fill out a **church Report of Child Abuse** form which is available from your supervisor and attached to this policy. The reporter may also directly contact the TN Department of Children's Services (DCS), the sheriff in Hamilton County or the chief law enforcement officer in Hamilton County. (423) 209-7000
The TN DCS Hotline number is 1-877-542-2873. Someone is available 24/7.
Resource regarding reporting information: <http://www.state.tn.us/youth/dcsguide/policies/chap14/14.1.pdf>

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2. The employee/volunteer alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be placed on leave from working with **church** minors pending an investigation.
3. **The church** will comply with the state's requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse as the law then exists.
4. **The church's** attorney and insurance company will be notified.
5. If the alleged abuse involves an ordained pastor **employed by the church**, the ([your church Presbytery](#)) will be notified and the Stated Clerk's office will be made aware of the situation.
6. **The church** will cooperate fully with any investigation of the incident by state or local authorities.
7. One person will be selected to act as the official spokesperson for **the church**. The ([selected individual](#)) will be available to the media to answer questions and to interpret the child protection policy.
8. All reports of child abuse or neglect shall be treated with the utmost discretion and held in absolute confidence, to the extent that such is possible. No person shall communicate any information concerning the alleged event to any person except as necessary a) to comply with **the church's** Child Protection Policy and/or the law or b) to cooperate with an official investigation of the alleged incident. Any breach of this confidentiality by a **church** employee/volunteer may be cause for immediate dismissal.

A pastor, after consultation with those conducting the official investigation of the incident, may authorize limited additional disclosure if necessary to protect other minors from harm in the near future, particularly where the person responsible for the abuse cannot be identified.

But in no case shall the identity of the victim or the accused person be disclosed except as required by law.

Any person who is found guilty of the alleged child abuse or misconduct will be removed from their **church employment/volunteer position** with minors.

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Enter your church name here.

**Child Protection Policy
Report of Suspected or Observed Child Abuse**

name of minor	date of report
address/city/state/zip	date of birth of minor or approximation
phone of minor	race
name of parent(s)/legal guardian(s) of minor	

INCIDENT INFORMATION

date of the incident time of the incident	location of the incident
parties involved	additional witnesses with contact information if available
Description of the incident: Location of the incident/where did the incident occur?	
What physical evidence, if any, is there of the abuse? If possible, this evidence should be preserved and turned in with this report.	
Name of the alleged perpetrator including name, address, phone and date of birth:	
Describe the incident.	

REPORTER INFORMATION

reporter's name	reporter's position
reporter's signature	
Name/position of individual receiving this report:	

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